

## Lake Hauroko – the *Sound of the Wind*

### Cruising notes by Paul Mosley

Lake Hauroko, 30 km long, 63 sq km in area, and with a maximum depth of over 460 metres, is a big body of water. Not only that, but it has a reputation for unpredictable and fierce winds, which are funneled by the steep sides of the glaciated valley in which Hauroko lies. As the southernmost road-accessible lake in New Zealand, lying near Tuatapere in Fiordland National Park, it's rather remote – it's not surprising that Hauroko is rarely visited by yachties. All the same, having visited the other southern lakes several times, we decided that it was time to take *Silmarillion* to Hauroko.



Lake Hauroko on a perfect day: hardly a breath of Hauroko's notorious wind.

It's a long way from Motueka to Hauroko – by the time we got home we'd clocked up 2,400 km, admittedly including visits also to Hawea and Mapourika, as well as a trip across to Stewart Island. After refueling at Tuatapere, the last place for groceries, fuel, etc., we arrived at Hauroko around noon on a grey, rainy day. With the last 25 km along a gravel road, *Silmarillion* looked decidedly grubby. However, by 4 pm the rain had passed, *Silmarillion* was on the water and rigged, and a gentle breeze off the lake promised a settled night. Launching was easy, although it could have been difficult if there had been any significant wind, as the ramp is 10-15 m away from the jetty – and because of overhanging trees on the access road it is impossible to rig the boat before launching.

For our first night, we motored to the western end of the beach in the bay directly south of the launching ramp, about 3 km distant. The spot was nice and sheltered (and probably would provide a sheltered anchorage in most conditions, although a strong northerly wind might be problematic). The sandflies certainly found it a congenial spot, but our mozzie net allowed us to sit out and enjoy cheese and crackers for a while, before retiring to the cabin to make tea.



A quiet anchorage at the southeast corner of the eastern arm.

The morning dawned calm and pleasant, and we took a walk along the beach back towards the ramp: there is a DoC track from the ramp that eventually climbs to the crest of the ridge overlooking the south arm of the lake, drops to Teal Bay Hut, and then climbs to the Hump Ridge. Having got some exercise and returned to *Silmarillion*, we set off under power, coasting around to the next bay to the west for a look-see, and lunch. The bay is very exposed to the north, and with anything more than the northerly breeze that we had, would be best avoided. After lunch, we sailed north to the far (northwestern) corner of the eastern arm, anchoring and pulling back to a very pleasant beach backed by mature forest, which provided good shelter for both us and the sandflies. There's a nice walk for a couple of hundred metres along the beach, but then the going gets tough.



The beach at the northwestern corner of the eastern arm. The hill and forest behind the beach provide good shelter from winds coming down the main lake from the north.

In the morning, we motored out through the narrow passage that separates Mary Island from the mainland, and immediately encountered some "serious wind" coming down the lake from the north. We quickly decided that sailing north up the lake would

be unrewarding, so turned south towards the lake outlet, very soon reaching an area of light, shifty breezes and then, by the mouth of Caroline Burn, encountering a steady breeze coming up from the south end of the lake. We concluded that the prevailing westerly wind was being funneled southwards down the northern arm of the lake, and northwards up the southern arm, with the two meeting and creating a “dead area” just to the south of Mary Island. Whatever, we sailed on down to the lake outlet, than back to the surprisingly sheltered anchorage of Teal Bay for lunch. It was here that we encountered virtually the only other folk we saw on the lake, visitors taking the jet boat ride down the Wairaurahiri River to the sea.

After lunch, the southerly breeze carried us quickly back up to Mary Island, where we again encountered light, shifty winds before getting into an increasingly strong northerly, with rough water. Rather than press on, we sailed round Mary Island and back to the sheltered bay at which we had stayed the previous night. Although exposed to the southeast, this bay looks to be the closest to an all-weather anchorage on Hauroko, and there’s plenty of room.



The head of the lake. The Dusky Track leads up the Hauroko Burn valley to Lake Roe, a two day tramp. There is virtually no shelter here for a visiting yacht, although there is good holding in about 2 metres of water on the delta.

Our third day on the lake dawned with a glorious, clear blue sky, and not a breath of wind. We’d planned to sail to the head of the lake; in the event, we motored virtually all the way, about 20 km, before a light southerly blew up just a couple of kilometres from Hauroko Burn Hut. We anchored on the delta for lunch; there is practically no shelter here at the head of the lake under any conditions, although the holding is very good. There is a track from the landing area (no jetty) at Hauroko Burn Hut, which leads up the valley towards Dusky Sound, but we didn’t go ashore, instead hoisting the sails and heading into the southerly breeze to return to our anchorage of the night before. For several kilometres the breeze was very shifty, but it became much steadier as we entered the narrowest and most steep-sided section of the lake, where it trends west-east. Four hours excellent and enjoyable sailing had us back at the narrow passage that separates Mary Island from the mainland; down

sails, and motor through and back to “our” sheltered beach for a quick plunge then cheese and wine.

Again, our fourth day on the lake dawned glorious, with not a breath of wind – ideal conditions for taking *Silmarillion* off the water. Even so, the operation proved quite tricky because of the distance from the jetty to the ramp – I wouldn’t fancy doing it with any significant wind, even if I could drive the boat straight onto the trailer, which I can’t. Fortunately, it seems that the eastern arm of the lake is less windy than the “wind tunnel” of the main lake, because it is wider and surrounded by low hills, so that launching and recovery shouldn’t usually be seriously affected by strong winds.

Talking about winds, as we explored the lake we kept an eye open for refuges in the event that the infamous Hauroko wind blew up. The arrows on the map indicate the possible refuges we identified; given the changeability of the winds on Hauroko, suitability on any particular day would have to be assessed at the time. The beaches at the northwestern and southeastern corners of the east arm provide the best shelter and good holding, and were our “go to” preference. Teal Bay, down near the outlet, is surprisingly sheltered, although it looks rather exposed, if the boat is pulled right back to shore. The tiny bay at Caroline Hut also would provide good shelter, especially from the north, but it is big enough for only one or two boats. Otherwise, the lake shores are very exposed, with deep water. Four deltas might provide shelter from the north – Caroline Burn on the west side of the southern arm, Russet Burn on the east side of the northern arm and the stream immediately opposite, and the major stream entering the narrows, on the north shore. We didn’t have chance to test these out, because we experienced such benign conditions. There is little shelter from a southerly anywhere in the main lake, but my supposition is that strong southerly winds up the lake are less of a threat than northerlies down the lake.

So, despite Hauroko’s bad reputation, we had an excellent four days on the lake – magnificent scenery, good sailing in up to 15 knot winds, some nice beach walks, and peaceful overnight anchorages. You can’t ask for better! The key to sailing Hauroko is, really, no different to any other place – wait for the right weather conditions, keep a careful eye on the weather (there is FM radio reception in the east arm), and be flexible. We really do recommend it!

